

The Fortune at the BOP

The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid, by C.K. Prahalad, was extremely hard to read. It is 14,000 pages of case studies and detailed information on how corporations can help alleviate some of the billions of people living below the poverty line. However, these case studies were meant to be inspirational in order to show companies how they could develop innovative business models by serving the people at the bottom of the economic pyramid. Prahalad states in the preface of his book that “this book is a result of a long and looney journey for me”(233). He believed strongly in learning from the success as well as the failures in order to come up with what will work. Prahalad felt that, “for sustaining energy, resources, and innovation, the BOP must become a key element of the central mission for large private-sector firms”(253).

I felt the best way to summarize this book was to look into one specific case study and see what its impacts on the bottom five billion people were. Casa Bahia was one that caught my eye because it was started by Samuel Klein who spent and survived two years in a Nazi concentration camp. More than 50 years ago he left his homeland to start a new life in Brazil. He created Casa Bahia in order to provide for himself and his family and it took off from there. Casa Bahia “took an innovative approach and devised a unique financing model to serve this particular market”(3222). In Brazil, as in other areas, several of the bottom of the pyramid customers feel they need and then desire all the same items that the top of the pyramid customers have. Casa Bahia's goal is to sit down with the poor customers and talk with them to work out a payment plan and really help them understand that it is important to buy what they need rather than what they want. “One important aspect of the Casa Bahia customer relationship is that every month customers must enter the store to pay their bills”(3432). Casa Bahia is just one

example of how making a profit and being a successful company is helping to contribute to the eradication of worldwide poverty.

Although I didn't read every case study in this extremely long book, I did really like what I read. I feel the Prahalad has developed a great guidebook for big companies and organizations to follow when creating their strategies for a more successful future. It opens up the idea further that profiting from the elimination of poverty can take place on a global scale. It also helps the developed world with improved ways to deliver offerings to the developing world.